

June 1, 2014

From: Brian McCullough, Meat Hunter

To:

Reinstatement of the Meat Hunter Culture in Montana

Atleast from 1965 FWP until 2006 FWP maintained late hunts after the regular 5 week rifle hunting season to allow primarily antlerless animals to be harvested in hunting areas where the population was in excess of management objective on both public and private land. I along with thousands of other meat hunters have participated in these late hunts for over 40 years. MCA 87-1-323 codified this as a responsibility of FWP. Since 2006 FWP has ignored this legislated responsibility. The elk harvest success rate for any elk is about 20% in Montana. This means over 75,000 elk licenses go unfilled every year. Since 2006 over 500,000 elk licenses have been purchased that were never filled.

Following are a series of options for late elk hunts that I believe would go a long ways towards reinstating the basic hunting culture in Montana which is to harvest an animal NOT to harvest just an animal with big horns. It needs to be clear that these hunts do not require Montana hunters with unfilled elk tags to participate in these hunts. Only those hunters who want to harvest an antlerless elk(which there are thousands) during a late hunt would participate. For those hunters who hold one or two of more of the 75,000 unfilled elk tags each year, there will be plenty of interest in this reinstated opportunity that was our culture in Montana for over 40 years before FWP took this opportunity away. Just think of all the hunting memories that never happended because of all these years of lost opportunity.

These options are drafted based upon my over 50 consecutive years of hunting experience in Montana, discussions with men and woman who I have meet hunting in the field, landowners whose property I have hunted on throughout the state, several FWP public meetings and discussions with FWP management and field staff.

If FWP does not reinstate these late hunts I will actively be against the new license fee for residents from now through the next legislative session.

Option 1.

For every district with an elk population in excess of management objective there must be atleast a one week late hunt in January if the population exceeds 10% of management objective. If over 20% of management objective then atleast a one week season in January and atleast one week in December. If 30% over management objective then there must be atleast one week late hunt in December, one week in January and one week in February.

This season would be open to all hunters with an unused valid elk license for the most recent hunting season. Private landowners who allow hunting on their land during these late hunts will be required to allow Montana residents to hunt for no fee. Non residents would be required to hunt with a licenseds guide.

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PAY MORE WHAT FOR !!

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Option 2

FWP extends the regular season into the last two weeks of December for all hunting districts with elk populations in excess of management objective.

Montana residents only who want to take advantage of this opportunity would be required to go on the internet and request of FWP to have their unfilled elk tag license to be made valid for the December late season hunt. The Montana resident would be required to pay a \$5.00 fee for the extension of this opportunity. The fee revenue would be used by FWP to offset administrative costs and overtime expense of FWP field staff. This season would only be provided to Montana residents. Non residents would not be allowed to participate in this hunting opportunity.

Option 3

FWP would authorize hunts as set forth in option 1 for resident and nonresident hunters. Nonresident hunters would be required to buy a ½ price nonresident antlerless only elk license and must obtain the services of a guide for the hunt. A nonresident with an unused elk license would be able to use their license to only harvest an antlerless elk and be required to have a guide.

This option provides revenue for FWP through the sale of non resident antlerless elk tags that would pay for the cost of management of the late hunts for field staff overtime and added administrative costs above base budget.

Option 4

FWP issues antlerless elk permits equal to 150% of elk in excess of management objective in each hunting district. These permits would be available to all landowners in the district on a first come first serve basis. No more than 50% of the permits may be given to any single landowner. The permits would be valid to hunt antlerless elk only on private land by hunters with unfilled elk tags. Landowners would have the option to coordinate the hunts and limit the hunt periods on their lands to when elk are on their property. If landowners choose to have FWP coordinate the hunts on their property the landowner shall pay to FWP a minimum of \$300 per hunting day to cover the overtime and travel cost of FWP field staff.

The hunt would be available to Montana resident hunters on a no fee basis. Non residents would have to be guided and would have the option to purchase a ½ price non resident antlerless elk license or use their unfilled regular license for hunting antlerless only elk.

The hunt would last from Mid December to the end of January following the regular rifle season.

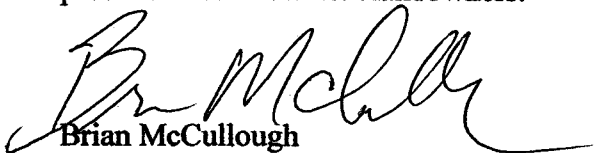
Landowners participating in the program are required to call in to FWP or e-mail to FWP the harvest of antlerless elk on their property each week. If no elk harvest for a week no reporting is required. Any landowner that does not comply with this requirement will be suspended from the program.

Option 5

Go back to what FWP did prior to 2006. Have the late hunt listed in the regulations and available with the elk B elk drawing. When applicants apply for their antlerless elk B license they can also apply for a late elk permit that allows them to use their unfilled elk tag(s) during late hunts in specified district or group of districts. In addition, nonresidents could apply for a late hunt antlerless elk permit and an antlerless elk license that is ½ the price of the non resident elk tag. These non resident permits would be limited to 10% of the late hunt antlerless elk permits available per district..

Benefits of reinstating these late hunts for elk include but are not limited to:

1. Provides FWP biologist with another tool to help them manage elk populations to management objective.
2. Reinstates the lost hunting opportunity for Montana meat hunters.
3. Provides a hunting opportunity for Montana's youth who are committed to athletics during the fall hunting season.
4. Provides a hunting opportunity during the time of year when elk move to lower ground so they are more accessible by the hunters.
5. Provides another hunting opportunity for Montana's women hunters.
6. It provides FWP with potential new revenue sources for their various programs.
7. Provides needed tourist dollars for small businesses in rural Montana during the tough winter months.
- 8 Provides income tax revenue to the the general fund as a result of the new tourists dollars spent by residents and non residents.
9. Creates Montana jobs for guiding the nonresident hunters.
10. Provides an opportunity for FWP to work with landowners who they have ignored since 2006 in spite of the FWP claim on Page 68 of the 2014 hunting regulations that states that it is their profession to work with landowners.



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